

462 All activities related to curing of disease
are also performed by specialized men,
though in some places women occasionally
participate. Help at childbirth is always as-
signed to experienced female relatives; there
are no professional midwives—nor profes-
sional marriage brokers.

• [844]
[759]
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463 Specialization is little developed. Only in
the largest centers are there a few individ-
uals concentrated on carpentry, tailoring,
trading, masonry, or some other activity.
[241] The families in Tenango and Amatenango
who carry on the ceramics industry also

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787 been taken away by the local authorities
776 and sent to the Indians' Affairs Office in
San Cristobal.

LIFE CYCLE

842 *Pregnancy and Childbirth*

183 The strongest desire of every Tzeltal couple
is to create a numerous family, preferably
843 boys. The relationship between sexual inter-
[833] course and pregnancy is well understood
among the Indians. They know that preg-
nancy lasts nine months and they keep a
843 good count of it. On the other hand, there
789 are ideas about the possibility of the woman
being influenced by old men or "the owners
of the nagual," who can interrupt pregnancy
and change the fetus from one woman to
another. This is why a woman who thinks
she is pregnant for three or four months
suddenly realizes that she carries nothing
any more, while another one, maybe her
neighbor, finds herself in advanced preg-
nancy, giving birth a few months later. It
is to be stressed, however, that these
changes can take place only among married
women.

• 844 In conservative villages (Tenejapa, Ox-
[81] chuc, Cancuc) there is no professional mid-
wife. Children are delivered by the oldest
women in the neighborhood.

[757] When labor begins, the first thing is to
[237] give the mother a beverage made of pow-
dered opossum tail dissolved in boiling wa-
ter. It is very common for Indians to have a
dry tail hanging next the fireplace. The
woman kneels at labor, facing the midwife.
The husband's belt or the woman's rebozo
is tied very tightly around the upper part of
the abdomen to prevent the child from "go-
ing up again." The mother can also help
herself by seizing a rope tied to the roof, or
taking firm hold of any post of the house.
The umbilical cord is chopped with a ma-
chete or cut with scissors, supported on an
[241] ear of corn. This ear is afterwards used as
[824] seed and is considered very fertile.

[757] When labor has finished, the mother is
given another hot beverage of pepper,

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- 844 cloves, and corncake, to keep her "warm
[759] and fertile." The placenta can be burned,
[842] thrown to the dogs, or deeply buried in case
[789] the mother does not want another pregnancy soon. The umbilical cord is put under a three-stone fireplace if the baby is a girl, on top of a tree if it is a boy so that he may become brave and agile when adult.
- 846 A few hours after childbirth, at the latest
515 the next day, both mother and child take a temascal (steam bath). Some women stay in the temascal until they feel completely recovered.

Childhood and Adolescence

- 789 During the first weeks of life, children are
774 in danger of losing their souls because their inexperience makes them an easy prey to the nagueles and bad spirits who wander around. As protection, mothers place a small piece of beeswax at the back of the child's head or tie, as a bracelet, a red or blue thread around the wrist. If none of these precautions are taken, the mother has to cover with branches the paths her child walks, so that his soul can easily find its way in case he loses it.
- 789 Because of all these dangers, fathers al-
852 ways try to perform the ceremony of "seed
774 the soul of the child" as soon as possible. It is during this ceremony that the child is given a name, later confirmed according to Catholic ritual at the ceremonial center. A very important aspect of the ceremony is selection of the godparents.
- [553]
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Sickness and Death

- 953 Most sicknesses come from infection or
776 malnutrition. To the natives, however, ill-
[888] nesses have a supernatural cause and are ascribed either to the anger of gods and spirits or to old people who have a nagual or who can throw a spell. The most frequent explanation is that nagueles or supernatural beings are acting against people. They can adopt human or animal form or appear as
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MARRIAGE

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he is whipped by the girl's father for a thief. The girl is stripped to the waist and whipped by her mother. With this the marriage is legalized. As the first act of their true married life, the girl makes posole and offers it to her parents. The boy is under obligation to bring presents of bread, chocolate, aguardiente, etc., to his parents-in-law. 584
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There are no formal restrictions of marriage, but the Church exercises a general influence against wedding brother and sister, cousins, or other relatives forbidden by Christian doctrine. In this, owing to the disposition of the Indians, and to the purely tribal character of marriage, which is not regarded by them as a religious or governmental matter, the Church is only partially successful. Informal unions actually do occur between brother and sister, apparently without any ceremony, the pair merely continuing to live together, their family relationship slowly changing into that of a married couple. That such a wife's status has some regularity in their eyes is shown by the fact that she has the same position in funeral rites as an ordinary wife. 582
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It is probably due to the negative influence of the Church that the various important crises in the life of an individual, ordinarily marked by such colourful ceremonies among primitive people, here are distinguished by very little of ritualistic observance. For description of the main events in the life course, we were again dependent on Señor Tovilla, whose information, given with little change below, checked entirely with the result of other inquiries. The funeral ceremonies were observed at first hand, after the fight described at El Encanto; for them, accordingly, I have used my own notes. 115
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When a woman is about to give birth to a child, a midwife—an older woman with some knowledge of herbs—is summoned. A few days before parturition, the woman is carefully tended by the midwife, well fed with choice food, and provided with a little rum. At the moment of giving birth, the midwife prays that the child may be brought forth happily. The mother kneels, and the midwife prepares to receive the child with a new cloth. Meantime the father is told to stay outside the house, or may be allowed to help in minor matters. 844

It is said that at Tenejapa the women go out into the woods to give birth untended, coming back with the child.

The baby is given Christian baptism. 852

A child's soul is considered to be particularly delicate, and therefore liable to magic influence. If the people of the house must go 789
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Family Authority and Community Control

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BEHAVIOR DEFINED IN THE FAMILY

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Socialization in the family provides the individual with the idiom for behaving in the wider community. The basic principles ordering behavior are respect and obedience toward those who are older, and care for those who are younger. Obedience, expressed by the verb *é'nn* which means both to believe (or to be gullible) and to obey, is instilled by cultivating a sense of fear and shame. Fear is communicated by the parent to the child by invoking evil spirits and by the threat or use of punishment, especially whipping with a leather strap. Shame is aroused by ridicule, jeering, and chastising. A good child is a quiet child; questioning is discouraged either by refusing to answer the child or by telling him to keep quiet. The negative aspect of good behavior is stressed. Significantly, the phrase "Behave yourself!" is translated into Spanish as "Don't do anything!" Good behavior is not rewarded either by praise or by gifts. The only public demonstration of affection toward children I have seen is by grandparents toward grandchildren: an elder might give his sweet roll at a ceremony to his grandchild and even fondle him. Parents show affection to youngsters under three years of age, although the last child may be coddled somewhat longer. Mothers and young children show intimacy and affection in delousing each other or combing each others' hair. Kissing is not a sign of intimacy but of formal respect in ceremonies.

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Beliefs concerning conception show awareness of both the male and the female contribution to the fetus. The man's sperm (*mal*) enters the womb, *yo?tan*, (also the word for heart) and mixes with the woman's flow, to bring about conception. The blood of a child is believed to come from its mother and the skin, bones, and brains from the father. During pregnancy, the father must have intercourse with his wife because his sperm nourishes the fetus. This continues right up to the birth of the child. Men too are believed to have wombs, and some men have trouble with "dropped wombs" caused by lifting heavy burdens.

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The only people in attendance at the birth of a child are the women of the immediate household, the mother of the woman giving birth if she is not a part of the household, and the midwife. Children are kept out of the

- 844 house, and the men usually leave the scene. Women are ashamed of their husbands seeing the afterbirth because they joke about it with other men. [522] (I do not know what the joking is about—possibly it is related to the frequency of sexual intercourse during pregnancy, since the placenta is believed to be increased by male sperm.) [833]

There is no ceremony attending childbirth. Although some women are assisted by one female relative, most call in a midwife, who is referred to as "grandmother of the child" and who comes when the birth pangs begin. [59] There is only one recognized midwife in Tzo'ontahal; she is the sister of one of the practicing curers and a niece of one of the former leading curers of Alannantik. She has patients on both sides of the dual division. On rare occasions, caused by witchcraft the Indians believe, a woman fails to give birth after two or three days of labor, and then a curer is [845] called in. [756]

846 The child is delivered with the mother kneeling on the floor. The midwife cuts the umbilical cord with a knife, and the child's navel is tied with a cord. The child is wrapped in cloths which have been smoked over incense, and then a woman's sash is wrapped around him from shoulders to feet, firmly binding the arms and legs so that they cannot move. It is felt that if this is not done, the child will snatch at everything and eventually become a thief. The body remains bound in this way for fifteen days. The umbilical cord and placenta are buried in the houseyard. Some say that a boy's umbilical cord may be tied in a tree "so that when the child grows, he can climb trees and cut fruit." The mother is given a drink of coffee, and the midwife binds her stomach with a band. Three days later the woman enters the sweatbath to cleanse herself. The midwife goes in with her and rubs her with branches of orange leaves and massages her stomach. If the child is born away from his own house, he is brought to it with great care so that his soul will not be dislodged from his body. The midwife makes a pad with branches of bushes growing near the springs, and the father sprays the child's body with springwater from his mouth.

[753] In the first "twenty days or one month" of life, the child's contacts with the world are limited to the immediate family in order to guard against soul-loss and illness from "hot" glances of outsiders. When anyone not of the household approaches the house in which there is a newborn child, he